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FIGHT- OR DIE!



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10 Terrific Issues Every Month

FIGHT- OR DIE!

IN DECEMBER 1940, THE BRITISH ARMY MOVED FORWARD FROM ITS POSITION AT MERSA MATRUH AND, TWO DAYS LATER, ENTERED SIDI BARRANI, CAPTURING 20,000 ITALIAN PRISONERS.

OKAY, TONY?
LET'S ROLL--AND
THE BET'S ON! THE
TROOP THAT BAGS
THE MOST TANKS
GETS THE FIRST
LEAVE IN CAIRO!

FOR TWO ARTILLERY CAPTAINS, TONY GIBBS AND "COOKY" COOK, IT WAS THE START OF AN ADVENTURE WHICH WAS TO PROVE THAT NO MAN CAN EXPECT TO CONTROL HIS OWN DESTINY IN THE VIOLENT TIMES OF WAR.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED APRIL, 1963

Chapter 1. *The Wager*

THE WAR WAS STILL YOUNG ENOUGH TO BE AN ADVENTURE. IT STILL SEEMED A JOKE TO BET ON KILLING ENEMY TANKS.

TALLYHO, TONY! I'LL THINK OF YOU WHEN I'M IN A SOFT BED IN CAIRO. I'LL LAUGH MYSELF TO SLEEP!

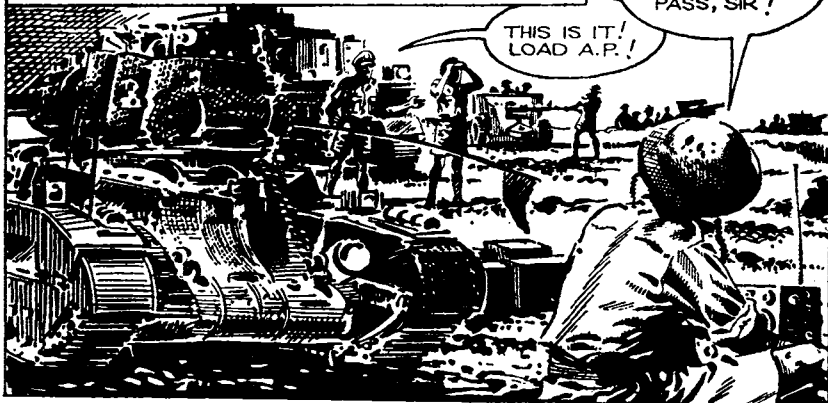
DON'T COUNT YOUR TANKS BEFORE YOU'VE CRACKED THE HATCHES, COOKY BOY!



AS THE MATILDA TANKS OF THE ARMoured DIVISION SWEEP ROUND IN AN ENCIRCLING MOVEMENT, THE GUNS WAITED IN AMBUSH FOR THE ENEMY ARMOUR TO SPILL THROUGH THE GAP LEFT IN THE MIDDLE.

R.A.F. REPORT ENEMY TANKS IN HELLFIRE PASS, SIR!

THIS IS IT! LOAD A.P.!



THE ITALIAN TANK-DESIGNERS HAD BUILT THEIR CRUISER TANKS FOR SPEED. BUT SPEED MEANT LIGHT ARMOUR. THE 25-POUNDER ARMOUR PIERCING SHELLS OPENED THEM LIKE TIN CANS.



IN THAT FIRST SUCCESSFUL ACTION, ABLE TROOP CHALKED UP EIGHT TANKS. IF THEY COULD KEEP IT UP, THE BET WAS IN THE BAG!



COME ON, BUSBY! WE'LL GRAB SOMETHING FROM THE WRECKS -- ANYTHING WITH THE TANK NUMBER ON IT.

IT WAS TONY GIBBS'S FIRST GOOD LOOK AT THE DESTRUCTION HIS GUNS HAD WROUGHT.



STONE ME! THEY'RE BREWED UP GOOD AN' PROPER, SIR!

THEY DIDN'T STAND AN EARTHLY!

AT THE NEXT BATTERED WRECK, HE FOUND ONE OF THE CREW STILL LIVING, MOANING FOR HELP.

HELP ME!
HELP ME!

ALL RIGHT,
OLD CHAP--
TAKE IT EASY!
WE'LL GET YOU
OUT OF IT!

HE CALLED UP THE STRETCHER-FITTED TRUCK FROM THE WAGON LINES AND AS THE ITALIAN WAS CARRIED AWAY HE GABBLED HIS GRATITUDE.

THANK YOU,
THANK YOU!

OKAY, OKAY! TAKE HIM
AWAY. TREAT HIM GENTLY,
POOR DEVIL-- HE WON'T BE
TROUBLING US AGAIN!



SOMEHOW, THE SWEET TASTE OF TRIUMPH WAS ALREADY TURNING SOUR IN TONY'S MOUTH. BUT IT STILL TASTED GOOD TO THE EBULLIENT COOKY...

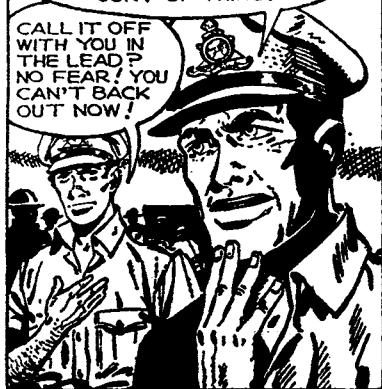
WHAT'S THE SCORE, TONY? HOW'S THIS FOR A START? SEVEN OF 'EM KNOCKED OUT.



SUDDENLY, TONY HATED THE IDEA OF WAGERING ON DEATH AND DESTRUCTION...

WE GOT EIGHT, COOKY. BUT, LOOK--LET'S CALL THE WHOLE THING OFF. I DON'T THINK I LIKE BETTING ON THIS SORT OF THING.

CALL IT OFF WITH YOU IN THE LEAD? NO FEAR! YOU CAN'T BACK OUT NOW!



THEY WERE TWO ENTIRELY DIFFERENT CHARACTERS -- BUT EACH WITH A GREAT LIKING FOR THE OTHER. YET NOW TONY FELT IRRITATED AT HIS FRIEND'S APPARENT CALLOUSNESS.

I JUST SAID CANCEL THE BET. YOU CAN HAVE THE FIRST CAIRO LEAVE IF IT'LL MAKE YOU HAPPY -- BUT I'M NOT BETTING ON HUMAN LIVES. OKAY?



COOKY JERKED IN SURPRISE AT THE OTHER'S CURT TONE.

HOLD YOUR HORSES, TONY!
'COURSE WE'LL CALL IT OFF IF
THAT'S THE WAY YOU FEEL -- BUT
DON'T SHED TEARS FOR THE
EYTIES! YOU KNOW HOW THEY
GOT KILLED? TRYING LIKE THE
DEVIL TO KILL US!



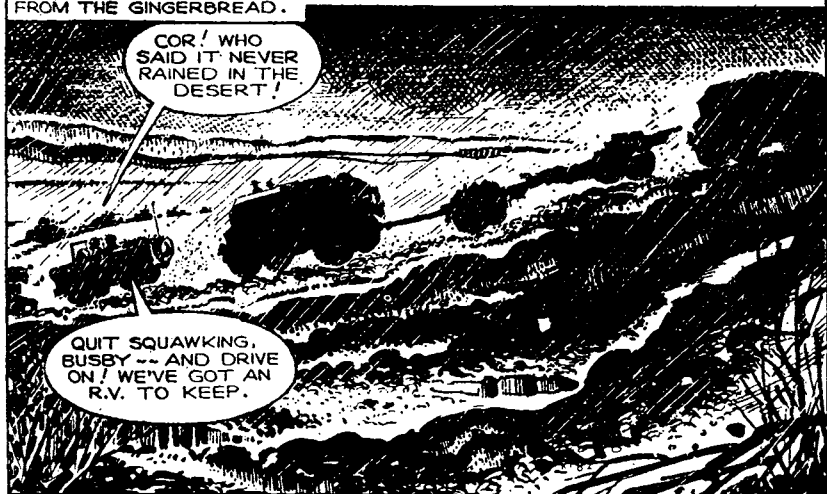
FROM THEN ON, THE IMPERIAL ARMY ADVANCED STEADILY. ALL THE MIGHT OF AN ARMoured BRIGADE IN BATTLE ROLLED AND LURCHED ACROSS THE UNEVEN SAND -- TANKS, GUNS, TRUCKS, AMBULANCES, A VAST ARMADA OF THE DESERT.



SOON THE WEATHER CHANGED, STARTING WITH A SANDSTORM DURING THE ATTACK ON SIDI BARRANI.

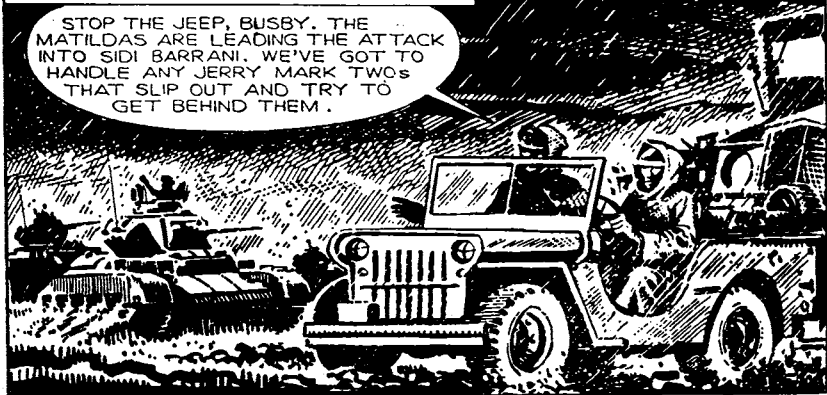


HIGH WINDS LASHED THE SAND INTO BITING SAVAGERY -- TO BE FOLLOWED BY TORRENTIAL DOWNPOURS OF RAIN. BATTLE IN THE SUN HAD BEEN HIGH ADVENTURE -- BUT UNDER THESE CONDITIONS THE GILT WAS DRIPPING FROM THE GINGERBREAD.



TONY GIBBS'S RENDEZVOUS WAS WITH A SQUADRON OF MATILDAS.

STOP THE JEEP, BUSBY. THE MATILDAS ARE LEADING THE ATTACK INTO SIDI BARRANI. WE'VE GOT TO HANDLE ANY JERRY MARK TWOS THAT SLIP OUT AND TRY TO GET BEHIND THEM.



THE MARK II PANZERS WERE THERE -- BUT THEY CHOSE TO FACE THE MATILDAS HEAD ON -- WITH DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES!

NEW TARGET AT TWO O'CLOCK. FIRE WHEN READY!

COO! YOU GOTTA ADMIT THEY'RE BRAVE! THEY'RE TAKING A HECK OF A PASTING!



THROUGH THE MIST OF THE RAIN, THE REASON FOR THE ITALIANS' FANATICAL DEFENCE COULD BE SEEN.

LORRIED
INFANTRY PARKED
BEHIND ENEMY TANK
SCREEN. DO WE
CLOBBER THEM,
TOO? OVER.

CALLING RED
NINER! NOT UNLESS
THEY SHOW FIGHT.
THEY WILL PROBABLY
SURRENDER.

THE ITALIAN COLONEL PETROZIE IN THE LAST SURVIVING ENEMY TANK FINALLY HUNG OUT A WHITE FLAG.

WE CAN FIGHT
NO LONGER! WE
ARE OVERWHELMED
BY SUPERIOR
ODDS...

CUT THE CROSS-TALK!
WHAT THE HECK AM
I GOING TO DO WITH YOU?
CAN YOU FIND YOUR OWN
WAY BACK TO OUR
INFANTRY?



PETROZIE RAISED HIS EYEBROWS. HE HAD HOPED FOR SOME CEREMONY--A FORMAL HANDING IN OF HIS ARMS, SOME RESPECT TO HIS RANK. BUT TO BE SHUNTED BACK WITHOUT EVEN A GUARD!

IF THAT IS YOUR ORDER...

THAT'S MY ORDER! I'LL WIRELESS BACK SO THAT THEY'LL EXPECT YOU.



BACK WENT THE MESSAGE TO BRIGADE H.Q. AND FROM THEM OUT ON TO THE BRIGADE NET. IT WAS UNFORTUNATE THAT ABLE TROOP'S SIGNALLER WAS HAVING TROUBLE WITH HIS WIRELESS.

AFRAID IT'S NO GOOD, SIR! WATER'S GOT IN IT. I'LL HAVE TO STRIP THE SET AND DRY IT OUT.

DO THAT AND BE QUICK ABOUT IT. WE'RE OUT ON A LIMB WITHOUT COMMUNICATIONS.



IT WAS TO BE TRAGICALLY UNFORTUNATE FOR COLONEL PETROZIE AND THE SURRENDERING ITALIAN INFANTRY. THE M.II CAME DIMLY OUT OF THE MIST, FLYING A WHITE FLAG THAT HUNG DIMLY IN THE RAIN.



THE OPENING ROUNDS WERE DEAD ON TARGET. THE TANK WAS HIT FIRST AND FOLLOWING ROUNDS RANGED ON THE TRUCKS.



EVEN AS THE GUNSMOKE CLEARED, THE RAIN STOPPED AND THE SUN BROKE THROUGH THE CLOUDS, TONY GIBBS STARED AT THEIR TARGET IN HORROR ...



THIS TIME, GIBBS WENT FORWARD WITH DESPAIR IN HIS HEART. ALREADY HE COULD SEE THE TROOP HAD BLUNDERED, SLAUGHTERING MEN COMING IN UNDER A FLAG OF SURRENDER.



THE BRITISH GUNNERS WERE SOON REMORSEFULLY TENDING THE WOUNDED ITALIANS WHO HAD SUFFERED FROM THAT TRAGIC TRICK OF FATE.



BUT THE PHILOSOPHY OF COLONEL PETROZIE COULD NOT WIPE AWAY TONY GIBBS'S BURDEN OF GUILT.

I SHOULD HAVE BEEN WARNED. I OUGHT TO HAVE SEEN YOUR FLAG! DARN IT! WHAT A FILTHY WAR!



MEANWHILE, THE R.A.F., DETAILED TO ASSIST IN THE SIDI BARRANI ATTACK HAD SCRAMBLED AS THE WEATHER CLEARED. THEY, TOO, WERE NOT SURE OF THE GROUND SITUATION.

ENEMY ACTIVITY BELOW! I AM GOING IN AT LOW LEVEL!



BRITISH AND ITALIAN ALIKE THREW THEMSELVES TO THE SAND AS THE BLENHEIMS DIVED IN, PLUMMETING THEIR BOMB LOADS ON FRIEND AND FOE INDISCRIMINATELY.



THE GUNNER CAPTAIN GOT TO HIS FEET, TREMBLING WITH ANGER AT THE UTTER FUTILITY OF IT ALL.



Chapter 2. Abandoned Gun

SIDI BARRANI WAS TAKEN -- AN ARMY OF ITALIANS CAPTURED. FOR A BRIEF MOMENT, IT SEEMED AS IF THE WAR IN THE DESERT WAS AS GOOD AS WON.

KEEP MOVING, SPORTS...
THOUGH WHERE THE HECK
WE'RE GOING TO PUT YOU
ALL, I WOULDN'T KNOW.



THE NEWS OF TONY GIBBS'S AMAZING
VOW HAD REACHED COOKY.

HEY, WHAT'S
ALL THIS TWADDLE,
TONY? YOU GONE
BOMB HAPPY OR
SOMETHING?

SORRY, COOKY--IT'S
NOT EASY TO EXPLAIN.
BUT I'VE GOT AN
APPOINTMENT WITH THE
BRIGADIER NOW.



THE BRIGADIER LISTENED IN COLD SILENCE TO TONY'S REQUEST.

IF IT WAS ANYONE ELSE, GIBBS, I'D SAY YOU HAD AN ATTACK OF COLD FEET--BUT I KNOW YOU BETTER. I'LL FIX YOU UP WITH A BASE JOB FOR A WHILE...

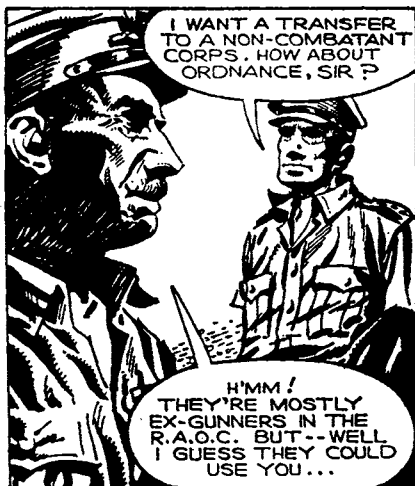
I'M SORRY. THAT'S NOT ENOUGH, SIR! I WANT A CLEAN BREAK.



LATER, THE BRIGADIER TALKED TO HIS STAFF OFFICER RESPONSIBLE FOR ORDNANCE.

I WANT A TRANSFER TO A NON-COMBATANT CORPS. HOW ABOUT ORDNANCE, SIR?

GIVE HIM ONE OF THE FIELD OUTFITS, KEITH. IT'S MY GUESS HE WON'T BE LONG IN CHANGING HIS MIND.



H'MM! THEY'RE MOSTLY EX-GUNNERS IN THE R.A.O.C. BUT--WELL I GUESS THEY COULD USE YOU...



RIGHT, SIR! I'VE A MOBILE INDUSTRIAL GAS COMPANY NEEDING A CAPTAIN.

A MOBILE INDUSTRIAL GAS COMPANY! YOU COULD NOT GET MUCH MORE NON-COMBATANT THAN THAT! BUT SERGEANT-MAJOR CHARLIE FELLEW WAS PROUD OF HIS OUTFIT.

SOMEBODY'S GOT TO MAKE THE OXY-ACETYLENE TO DISH OUT TO THE FITTERS. THEY CAN'T MEND TANKS WITHOUT OXY-ACETYLENE, CAN THEY, SIR?



GENERATING SETS, RECTIFYING SETS, COMPRESSOR SETS. ALL HIGHLY TECHNICAL, SIR. AND I UNDERSTAND YOU'RE NOT...



NO, I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT THE PROCESS. BUT I CAN COMMAND IT. I LOOK TO YOU TO PRODUCE THE GAS, SERGEANT-MAJOR.

THE FORMAL TRANSFER HAD STILL TO GO THROUGH, BUT TONY SWAPPED HIS GUN BADGE FOR THE ORDONANCE ONE.

GOOD BADGE, THAT, SIR. AN OLD 'UN, TOO... DATES BACK TO THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

I KNOW, AND I'LL TRY NOT TO DISGRACE IT, SERGEANT-MAJOR.



THEN THE WAR FLARED UP AGAIN. THE DRIVE FOR SOLLUM, BARDIA, BENGHAZI WAS ON. COOKY COOK ACTED AS IF HE HAD TO FIGHT FOR TWO TROOPS NOW.

FIRE! WIPE OUT THE SWINE!



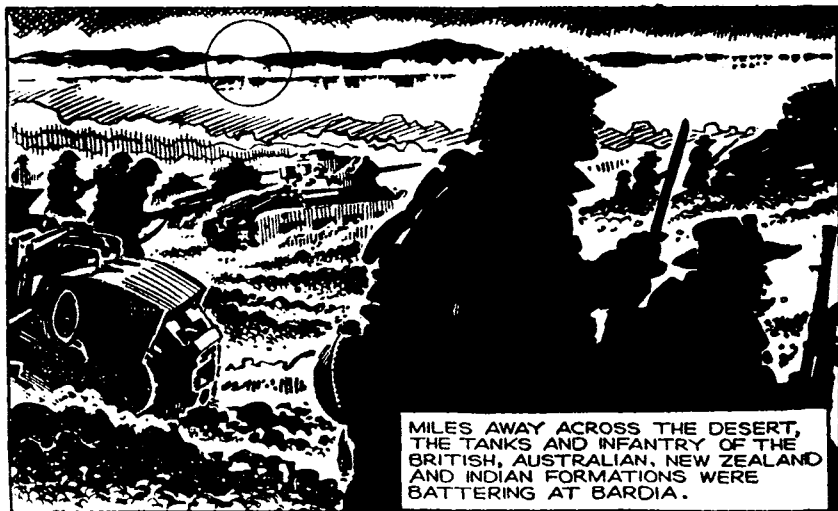
THE ITALIANS HELD, BROKE, HELD AGAIN, ALL THE TIME LOSING LONG TORTUOUS COLUMNS OF PRISONERS TO THE COMMONWEALTH TROOPS. AFTER SOLLUM, THE ADVANCE FOR BARDIA...

SWING SOUTH! THEY'VE PUT US IN A BOX FOR PROTECTION OF THE SOFT TRUCKS! MIGHT MEET THE GAS MEN, EH?



YOU MEAN TONY GIBBS'S OUTFIT? HAVEN'T HEARD MUCH OF HIM LATELY, COOKY.

IN THE THREE-SIDED BOX MADE BY THE ARMOUR, THE MAINTENANCE AND HEADQUARTERS FLEET OF TRUCKS AND TRAILERS LEAGUERED THAT NIGHT IN A WADI, WHILE THE ESCORTING ARTILLERY WAS SITED ON THE FLANKS.



MILES AWAY ACROSS THE DESERT, THE TANKS AND INFANTRY OF THE BRITISH, AUSTRALIAN, NEW ZEALAND AND INDIAN FORMATIONS WERE BATTERING AT BARDIA.

BUT FROM TOBRUK, FARTHER TO THE WEST AND STILL IN ITALIAN HANDS, CAME A RAIDING COLUMN OF TANKS MANNED BY THE ELITE BLACKSHIRT REGIMENT.

THIS TIME THEY WILL NOT TAKE BARDIA AS EASILY AS SOLLUM! WE SHALL ATTACK THEIR COMMUNICATIONS, CUT OFF THEIR AMMUNITION SUPPLY! **FORWARD!**



IT WAS A DARING, UNEXPECTED MOVE, TAKING THE ATTACKERS' WEAKEST POINT BY SURPRISE. THE BLACKSHIRTS OPENED UP AT LONG RANGE ON THE "SOFT" VEHICLES IN THE WADI LEAGUER.

SUFFERING CATS!
IT'S THE EYTIES!
GET MOVING, YOU
LAYABOUTS! WE'VE
GOT TO GET OUT
OF HERE!

DON'T PANIC,
SERGEANT-MAJOR!
THERE'S A TWENTY-
FIVE POUNDER TROOP
DEFENDING THE
LEAGUER.



THE BRUNT FELL ON COOKY'S FOUR GUNS. THEY HIT BACK AT THE ITALIAN ARMOUR OVER OPEN SIGHTS.

NUMBER THREE ~
WHAT'S HAPPENED?
WHY AREN'T YOU
FIRING?

OUT OF
AMMO, SIR! I'M
REPLENISHING
FROM THE
AMMO TRUCK!

MORE THAN ONE TRUCK HAD BEEN HIT ALREADY. THE ODDS AGAINST THE AMMO TRUCK BEING ON THE RECEIVING END OF A TANK SHELL WERE NOT HIGH. BUT WHEN IT HAPPENED, THE RESULT WAS AWESOME.



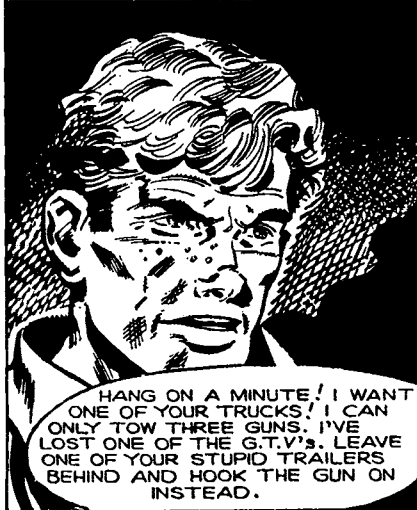
MOST OF NO. 3 DETACHMENT WERE LOST. THE OTHER THREE GUNS KEPT FIRING, HOLDING OFF THE MARAUDERS WHILE THEIR AMMO LASTED, GIVING THE SOFT VEHICLES A CHANCE TO PULL OUT.



DUE TO TONY'S ADAMANT ATTITUDE, HIS VEHICLES WERE THE LAST TO MOVE -- EXCEPT FOR THE GUNS.



WHI COOKY HAD
ANOTHER DEMAND
TO MAKE...



HANG ON A MINUTE! I WANT
ONE OF YOUR TRUCKS! I CAN
ONLY TOW THREE GUNS. I'VE
LOST ONE OF THE G.T.V.'s. LEAVE
ONE OF YOUR STUPID TRAILERS
BEHIND AND HOOK THE GUN ON
INSTEAD.

SORRY! I'M NOT LEAVING ANYTHING.
THE TRAILERS ARE ON MY CHARGE.
YOU CAN LEAVE THE GUN--THERE'S
PLENTY MORE. DRIVE ON!



GIBBS! YOU'RE A
GUNNER! YOU CAN'T
REFUSE TO PULL
A GUN OUT!

I CAN --
AND OO! I'M
A GUNNER NO
LONGER!

TO COOKY THAT WAS BLASPHEMY!
YOU COULD NOT LEAVE A GUN
TO BE CAPTURED!



THERE'S
NO TIME FOR
THIS FARCE! I'LL
GET THE TRUCK
MYSELF!

YOU WON'T!
NOW GET OUT OF
MY WAY! THE
TANKS ARE
CLOSING IN.

COOKY'S RAGE BLINDED HIS REASON. HIS PILE-DRIVING RIGHT SLID PAST TONY'S EAR. GIBBS SNAPPED A TORRID LEFT INTO THE OTHER'S MIDRIF AND COMPLETED THE DESTRUCTION WITH A SOLID PUNCH TO THE JAW.



AS HE BUNDLED THE INERT BODY INTO THE JEEP, THE THREE GUNS DROVE PAST.



THE SITUATION COULD STILL HAVE BEEN DESPERATE HAD NOT A SQUADRON OF MATILDAS, HASTILY RECALLED BY WIRELESS, ARRIVED TO TAKE CARE OF THE MARAUDING ITALIAN ARMOUR.



ENEMY TANKS APPROACHING FROM NORTH! PREPARE TO WITHDRAW. PROCEED INDEPENDENTLY TO TOBRUK!

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, IT WAS A SILENT AND BITTER MAN WHO RETURNED TO COLLECT THE ABANDONED 25-POUNDER GUN. CAPTAIN COOKY COOK FELT DISGRACED.

YOU COMING BACK FOR THAT PEA-SHOOTER? MIGHT SEND A LETTER OF THANKS TO THE ARMOURD CORPS FOR IT! TRUST THE CAVALRY TO GET YOU OUT OF A MESS!

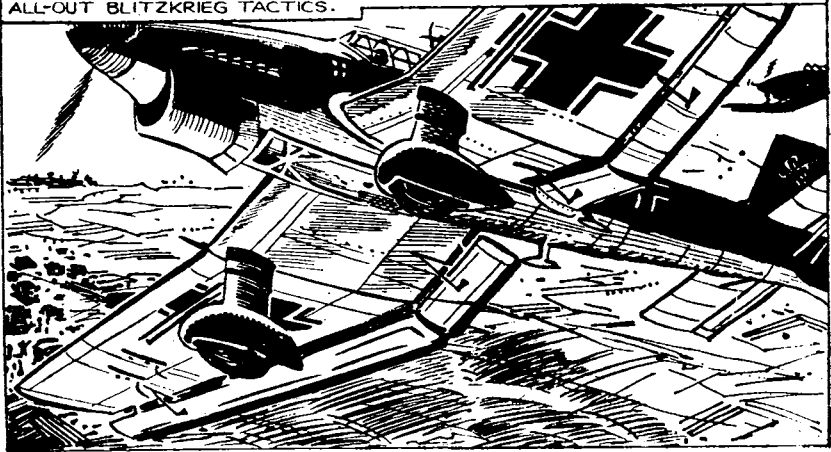


Chapter 3. *Retreat*

THE PATHS OF TONY GIBBS AND COOKY COOK DID NOT CROSS AGAIN UNTIL APRIL IN THE FOLLOWING YEAR. THE BRITISH ARMY HAD ENTERED GREECE IN A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO HOLD THE GERMAN INVASION. THE ARMoured BRIGADE SET UP ITS MAINTENANCE UNIT NEAR MOUNT OLYMPUS.



IT WAS TO BE A FORLORN GESTURE ON BRITAIN'S PART. THE IMPERIAL FORCES WERE FEW IN NUMBER, THE GREEK ARMY ILL-EQUIPPED. THE GERMANS WERE DRIVING DOWN FROM YUGOSLAVIA, EXPLOITING THEIR ALL-OUT BLITZKRIEG TACTICS.



HUMMED INCESSANTLY, THE BRIGADE HELD
 IN GROUND UNTIL, INEVITABLY, THE ORDER
 CAME TO RETREAT.



THE NARROW MOUNTAIN ROADS MADE THE WITHDRAWAL
 DIFFICULT. THE VEHICLES OF THE BRIGADE'S TAIL
 BECAME THE FIRST CASUALTIES...



COOKY COOK WAVED A BRIGADE AUTHORITY IN FRONT OF TONY'S NOSE ...

THIS'LL TELL YOU WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR GAS METERS! I'VE TOP PRIORITY TO ESTABLISH ANOTHER DEFENCE LINE NORTH OF VOLOS. GET YOUR OUTFIT OUT OF THE WAY!

HOW THE DICKENS CAN I? THERE'S NO ROOM TO PASS!



DITCH YOUR TRUCKS OVER THE SIDE! YOU WON'T GET THEM OUT OF GREECE, ANYWAY. DITCH THEM -- OR, BY HEAVENS, I'LL OPEN FIRE ON THEM!



FOR ONE EXPLOSIVE MOMENT, TONY HESITATED -- BUT COOK HAD THE BRIGADE PRIORITY.

OKAY -- I'LL DITCH MY TRUCKS. ALL EXCEPT ONE TO TAKE THE MEN OUT.

THAT'S THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE SHOWED SENSE SINCE SID! BARRANI!



THEY HAD THE CYLINDER-STORE TRUCK
 ROLLED IN TO THE ONLY DEPRESSION IN
 THE ROCK. THEN, ONE BY ONE -- THE
 VALUABLE EQUIPMENT WAS PUSHED OVER
 THE CLIFF EDGE. SERGEANT-MAJOR
 CHARLIE PELLEW WATCHED THEM GO
 WITH FEARS IN HIS EYES.



THE GUN TROOP THUNDERED SOUTH AND TONY
 LOADED ALL HIS MEN IN THE CYLINDER TRUCK.



BEFORE VOLOS, THEY MADE CONTACT WITH THE MASS OF THE ARMY, CAUGHT UP IN THE BOTTLENECK OF THE PORT.



THEY TURNED ON TO A SIDE ROAD WHICH LED SOUTHWARDS INTO THE MOUNTAINS. THEN...





SOME THING OF THE OLD COOKY
WROKE THROUGH--AS IF HE STILL
COULD NOT BELIEVE TONY GIBBS
HAD DESERTED THE ROYAL
REGIMENT THEY BOTH HAD BEEN
PROUD TO SERVE IN.



IT WAS TRUE THE GERMANS WERE
DIFFERENT TO THE ITALIANS, BUT
WAR WAS STILL A MATTER OF
SENSELESS SLAUGHTER IN TONY'S
BOOK.



THE VILLAGE OF KAZONE OVERLOOKED THE AEGEAN SEA. THERE WAS NO OTHER ROAD LEADING FROM IT, TONY REALISED IN DISMAY.



AS TONY AND HIS ORDNANCE MEN TOOK COVER THEY SOON SAW THAT NEITHER THEY NOR THE VILLAGE WAS THE TARGET.



WHEN THE BOMBERS LEFT, THERE WAS AN UNEARTHLY
THUNDER. THEY TURNED THE TRUCK AND HEADED BACK
TOWARD THE GUN POSITIONS.



GOOD GRIEF!
WHAT A
SHAMBLES!

LOOKS LIKE
CAPTAIN COOK
OVER THERE,
SIR!

LUCKY HAD BEEN HIT BY SPLINTERS
AND WAS MORE SHOCKED THAN
OBVIOUSLY HURT. HE BABBLED LIKE
A CRAZY MAN.



THE FILTHY
JERRIES! THEY'VE
SMASHED MY
TROOP... MY
TROOP!

TAKE IT EASY,
BOY. WE'LL FIX
YOU UP.

THEY LIFTED COOKY ABOARD THE TRUCK AND SET OFF BACK TO VOLOS; BUT BEFORE THEY HAD GONE FAR...

GERMANS--
AND MOVING
FAST! BACK UP
BEFORE THEY SPOT
US! BACK TO THE
VILLAGE!

THE VILLAGE OF KAZONE WAS STRANGELY SILENT.

NOBODY
ABOUT, SIR.
WHAT SHALL
I DO?

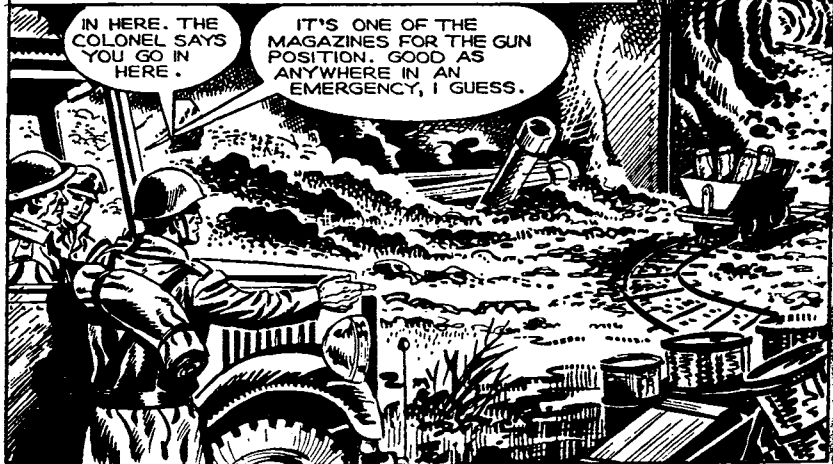
THEY MUST HAVE
BUZZED OFF INTO THE
HILLS. KEEP GOING
WE'LL TRY THE GREEK
GUN POSITION. THEY
MAY HAVE A MEDICAL
OFFICER THERE.



KORIZIS SPOKE RAPIDLY TO THE GREEK SOLDIER, WHO MOUNTED THE STEP OF THE TRUCK AND DIRECTED THEM NORTHWARDS FOR A QUARTER OF A MILE.

IN HERE. THE COLONEL SAYS YOU GO IN HERE.

IT'S ONE OF THE MAGAZINES FOR THE GUN POSITION. GOOD AS ANYWHERE IN AN EMERGENCY, I GUESS.



WHAT HAD BEEN A NATURAL CAVE HAD BEEN ENLARGED AND CONVERTED INTO A STORAGE PLACE FOR SHELLS AND CORDITE CHARGES.

GET THE TRUCK HIDDEN BEHIND THAT STACK OF SHELLS. WE'LL HAVE TO LEAVE IT AND THINK OF GETTING AWAY BY SEA IF POSSIBLE. BUT FIRST THINGS FIRST--WE MUST HAVE A DOCTOR FOR CAPTAIN COOK.



OUTSIDE, THE GERMANS HAD ALREADY ARRIVED TO TAKE OVER THE KAZONE GUN POSITION.

QUICK OFF THE MARK, WEREN'T THEY, SIR?

IT'S A VITAL DEFENCE POINT. IT COVERS THE PORT OF VOLOS. I ONLY HOPE THE GREEKS SPIKED THE GUNS BEFORE HANDING THEM OVER!



IT WAS SOME TIME LATER, WHEN COLONEL KORIZIS JOINED THE BRITISH, BRINGING THE GREEK MEDICAL OFFICER WITH HIM.

WE MUST BE QUICK! I TELL THEM WE HAVE SICK MEN IN BARRACKS. WHERE IS YOUR WOUNDED COMRADE?

IN THE TRUCK. I DON'T THINK HE IS BADLY HURT.



COOKY HAD ALREADY
RECOVERED FROM THE
SHOCK...

IT'S ALL RIGHT, DOC.
JUST BANDAGE THIS CUT
ON THE ARM AND I'LL BE
FIT TO FIGHT AGAIN.

THERE WILL BE NO MORE
FIGHTING! WE HAVE
SURRENDERED AND YOUR ARMY
IS EVACUATING FROM EVERY
POSSIBLE PORT. GREECE
IS FINISHED!



TONY ASKED THE QUESTION WHICH
HAD BEEN WORRYING HIM.

YOUR GUNS?
YOU PUT THEM
OUT OF ACTION.
DIDN'T YOU?

I - I WANTED
TO, BUT THE
SURRENDER
TERMS WERE
EXPLICIT. THE GERMANS
HAVE ALREADY SENT
TRAINED HEAVY GUN
CREWS TO TAKE
OVER.



THERE WAS A SUDDEN ANGRY
GROWL FROM COOKY...

YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?
THEY'LL SHELL THE SHIPS TRYING
TO GET OUR BLOKES OUT OF
VOLOS!

I AM SORRY!
BUT I HAD TO
OBEY ORDERS.



Chapter 4. *Return to Action*

DESPITE THE RISK HE WAS TAKING, THE GREEK COLONEL SUPPLIED THEM WITH FOOD. COOKY, HOWEVER, WAS STILL SAVAGE IN HIS CONDEMNATION OF THEIR SURRENDER TERMS.



THEY SPENT AN UNEASY NIGHT, TO BE WAKENED AT DAWN BY THE CRASHING EXPLOSION OF THE NEARBY GUN BATTERY.



THE PORT OF VOLOS WAS CROWDED WITH THE BRITISH EVACUATION FLEET. THE GUN POSITION AT KAZONE HAD BEEN DESIGNED TO GUARD THE ENTRANCE TO THE PORT; NOW IT WAS GUARDING THE EXIT!

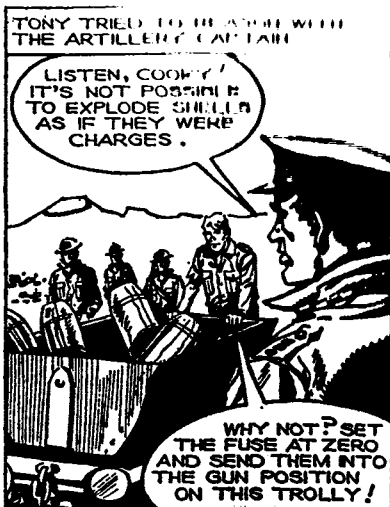


THE MORNING SUN WAS RISING ON HIGH DRAMA IN VOLOS. IT WAS REFLECTED ON A SMALLER SCALE OUTSIDE THE MAGAZINE AT KAZONE.



AGAIN! THEY'RE HAMMERING THE PORT GOOD AND PROPER. WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT IT? STAND AND WATCH!

WE - - YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING, COOKY!



BUT COOKY WAS PAST LISTENING TO REASON. HE WAS FIGHTING MAD. WITH A FUSE KEY TAKEN FROM THE MAGAZINE, HE WORKED ON THE FUSES OF THE TWO SHELLS ON THE TROLLY.



COOKY ROUNDED FURIOUSLY ON THE "NON-COMBATANT"...

GET FROM UNDER MY FEET, GIBBS! YOU AND I DON'T TALK THE SAME LANGUAGE ANY MORE!



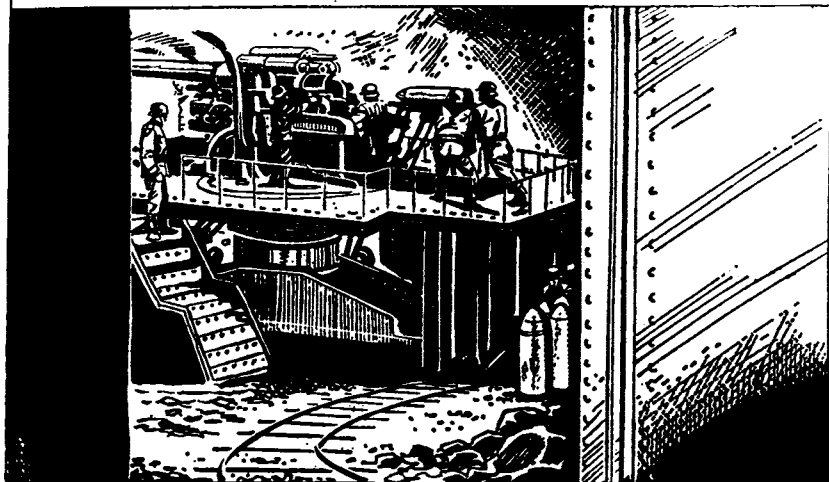
THE FUSE SECONDS WERE SLIPPING AWAY...

QUICK, LADS! WE RUN THE TROLLY RIGHT UP TO THE GUNS. THEY MAY SEE US-- BUT IT'S A RISK WE'VE GOT TO TAKE!

WE'RE WITH YOU, SIR!



THE RAILS RAN RIGHT DOWN TO THE BASE OF THE MASSIVE GUN MOUNTINGS. IMMERSED IN THE LOADING AND FIRING OF THE GUNS, THE GERMANS DID NOT NOTICE THE TROLLEY AS IT SPED TOWARDS THEM...



...UNTIL IT WAS WITHIN A FEW YARDS OF THE GUN ITSELF. THEN IT WAS TOO LATE...



HIMMEL!
ACHTUNG!
ACHTUNG!

ACCURSED
ENGLANDERS!

FOR A SECOND, TIME STOOD STILL. COOKY AND HIS VOLUNTEERS WERE ROOTED TO THE GROUND, AS IF MESMERISED WHILE WAITING FOR THE EXPLOSION.



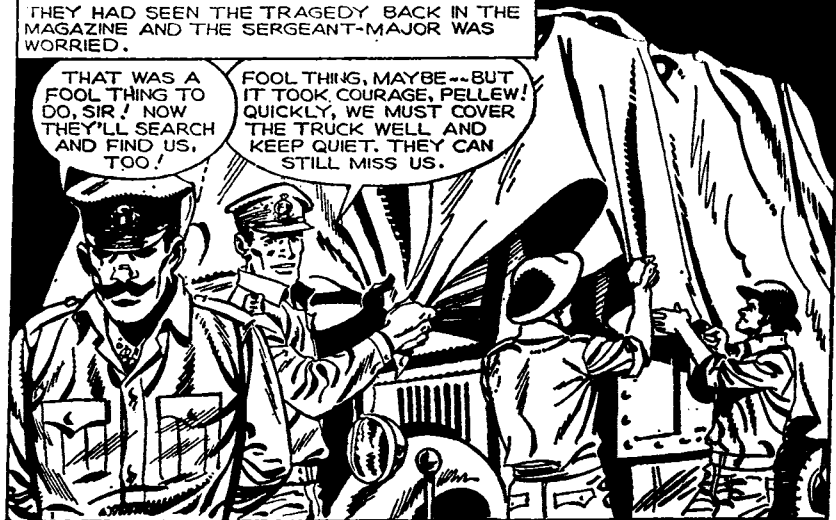
THE TROLLEY CRASHED INTO THE BASE OF THE GUN MOUNTING AND THAT WAS ALL. ALREADY GERMAN SOLDIERS HAD CLOSED IN UPON COOKY AND HIS MEN.



THEY HAD SEEN THE TRAGEDY BACK IN THE MAGAZINE AND THE SERGEANT-MAJOR WAS WORRIED.

THAT WAS A FOOL THING TO DO, SIR! NOW THEY'LL SEARCH AND FIND US, TOO!

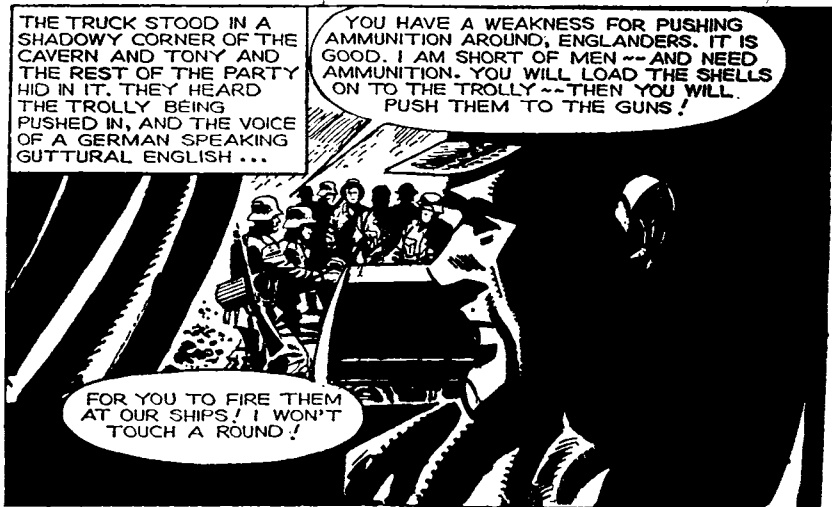
FOOL THING, MAYBE--BUT IT TOOK COURAGE, PELLEW! QUICKLY, WE MUST COVER THE TRUCK WELL AND KEEP QUIET. THEY CAN STILL MISS US.



THE TRUCK STOOD IN A SHADOWY CORNER OF THE CAVERN AND TONY AND THE REST OF THE PARTY HID IN IT. THEY HEARD THE TROLLEY BEING PUSHED IN, AND THE VOICE OF A GERMAN SPEAKING GUTTURAL ENGLISH...

YOU HAVE A WEAKNESS FOR PUSHING AMMUNITION AROUND, ENGLANDERS. IT IS GOOD. I AM SHORT OF MEN--AND NEED AMMUNITION. YOU WILL LOAD THE SHELLS ON TO THE TROLLEY--THEN YOU WILL PUSH THEM TO THE GUNS!

FOR YOU TO FIRE THEM AT OUR SHIPS! I WON'T TOUCH A ROUND!



INSIDE THE CAB OF THE TRUCK, TONY'S FINGERNAILS CUT INTO HIS PALMS AS HE WATCHED THE GERMAN SMASH HIS HAND ACROSS COOKY'S FACE.

THAT IS INSOLENCE!
YOU WILL OBEY ME,
SCHWEINHUND!



STILL COOKY REFUSED. THE GERMAN SNATCHED THE LUGER FROM HIS BELT...

I HAVE NO TIME TO
WASTE ON YOU. GET
TO WORK ON THOSE
SHELLS-- **OR YOU
DIE!**



IN THE GLOOM OF THE HIDDEN TRUCK, CAPTAIN TONY GIBBS WAS COMING TO TERMS WITH HIMSELF. THE PITY HE HAD FELT FOR THE ITALIANS HAD LONG SINCE OOZED AWAY UNDER THE PRESSURE OF THE GERMAN BLITZ. THE MENACE OF THIS BRUTAL ENEMY COMPLETED THE TRANSFORMATION.



IF I DO NOTHING
NOW -- I WILL
NEVER BE ABLE
TO LIVE WITH
MYSELF AGAIN!

STRANGELY, DESPITE THE DANGER, HE FELT EXCITED, ALMOST HAPPY FOR THE FIRST TIME FOR MONTHS. HE SLIPPED SILENTLY OUT OF THE CAB TOWARDS THE NEAREST GERMAN ...



IN ONE VIOLENT MOVEMENT, HE FELLED THE GERMAN, GRABBED HIS CARBINE AND FIRED.



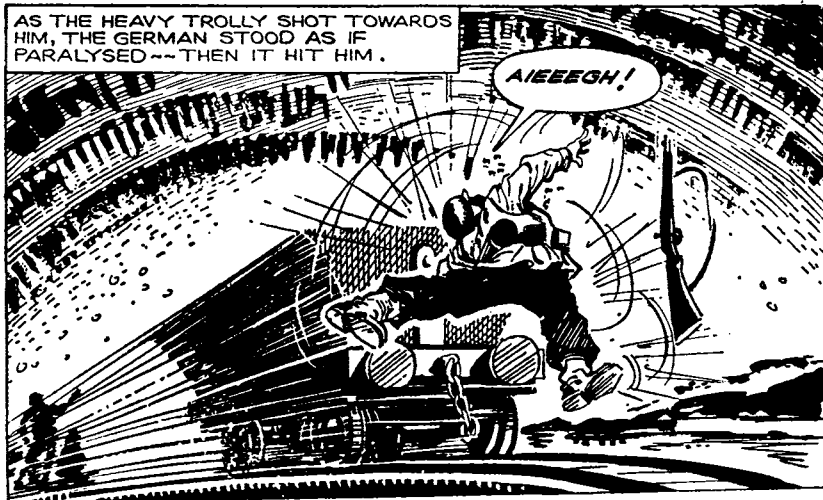
TWO MORE SNAP SHOTS CUT DOWN TWO MORE GERMANS. THE FOURTH MAN SCURRIED TO THE END OF THE MAGAZINE ...



BUT IT WAS COOKY, COMING TO LIFE AGAIN, WHO SAW THE QUICKEST METHOD OF DEALING WITH THE LAST GERMAN. HE GAVE THE TROLLEY A HEFTY PUSH...



AS THE HEAVY TROLLEY SHOT TOWARDS HIM, THE GERMAN STOOD AS IF PARALYSED--THEN IT HIT HIM.



IT WAS COMPLETE VICTORY. A SMALL ONE -- A TEMPORARY ONE -- BUT YET A VICTORY! THERE WAS AN AIR OF EXHILARATION IN THE MAGAZINE.

TONY! BY GOLLY! I KNEW YOU'D SEE THE LIGHT AGAIN! WE'VE GOT SOME WEAPONS, NOW! LET'S GO GET THE REST OF THE JERRIES AND SPIKE THE GUNS.



COOKY! YOU'RE CRAZY! WE'VE GOT FOUR CARBINES AND A LUGER -- AND WE START A WAR! STILL, WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO?

THERE WAS EAGER COMPETITION FOR THE FEW WEAPONS. ONLY SERGEANT-MAJOR CHARLIE PELLEW SEEMED RELUCTANT.

HERE, SERGEANT-MAJOR! TAKE THIS CARBINE --

NOT ME, SIR! I'M NO HAND WITH THEM THINGS. THE ONLY EXPLOSIVE THINGS I'M A DAB HAND AT ARE GAS CYLINDERS!



THE PLAN WAS FOR A DIRECT ASSAULT ON THE GUN POSITION. BUT SURPRISE WAS LOST WHEN AN ALERT SENTRY SIGHTED THE LITTLE GROUP AS THEY APPROACHED ...

ACH!
ENGLANDERS!
SOUND THE
ALARM!
CLOSE THE
GATE!



THEY TOOK THE BULL BY THE HORNS AND CHARGED. BUT THE IRON DOOR SLAMMED INTO PLACE EVEN AS THEY REACHED THE GATE!

DARN IT, WHAT THE HECK DO WE DO NOW?

WE BLAST IT!
REMEMBER WHAT CHARLIE PELLEW SAID ABOUT THE GAS CYLINDERS? THEY'RE EXPLOSIVE! WE'RE ARTILLERYMEN, AREN'T WE?



BACK IN THE MAGAZINE, TONY HURLED QUESTIONS AT CHARLIE ...

ALL I KNOW ABOUT THE GAS ARE THE SAFETY RULES. IF THE GAS TOUCHES OIL IT CATCHES FIRE, DOESN'T IT?

IT DOES THAT! THE WHOLE CYLINDER EXPLODES! KEEP OIL AWAY FROM THE CYLINDERS--SAFETY RULE NUMBER ONE, THAT IS!



TONY BECAME GALVANISED INTO ACTION ...

RIGHT! COOKY, UNSCREW THE FUSE OFF A SHELL AND TAKE OUT THE T.N.T. -- BUT GENTLY! CHARLIE, I WANT SIX FULL GAS CYLINDERS. SMITH, GET OIL FROM THE SUMP OF THE TRUCK AND PETROL FROM THE TANK. THE REST, WITH ME, OUTSIDE...



OUTSIDE, TWO HOLES WERE DUG IN THE GROUND WHILE THE MEN COLLECTED TWO LARGE DRAIN PIPES FROM THE STACK NEAR THE MAGAZINE.

UP-END THEM IN THE HOLES. I THINK I'VE GOT THE ANGLE RIGHT. BUT I WANT TO SEE IF THEY FIT.

LIKE BLOOMIN' BIG MORTAR BARRELS, AREN'T THEY, SIR?



THEN TONY PUT SOME POWDERED T.N.T. IN THE PIPES AND POURED PETROL INTO THE HOLES.

NOW, HERE'S THE DRILL! WE SOAK THE NECK OF THE CYLINDERS IN OIL, OPEN THE VALVES AND LET THE GAS ESCAPE. THAT CATCHES FIRE AND, IF WE'RE LUCKY, BY THE TIME THE CYLINDER GETS THERE, IT'S REACHED EXPLOSION POINT!

GETS THERE?
HOW?

I GET IT!
YOU'RE GOING
TO USE THEM
AS MORTARS!

IT WAS CRUDE GUNNERY,
BUT IT MIGHT WORK!

RIGHT! OPEN THE VALVES! COOKY,
GET READY TO LIGHT THE PETROL IN
THE HOLES. THAT WILL HAVE SEEPED
THROUGH ON TO THE T.N.T. IT WILL
GIVE US THE FIRING CHARGE.

WE'LL GET RESULTS
ONE WAY OR THE OTHER!
IT'LL KILL THEM ...
OR US!

AS COOKY TOUCHED OFF THE PETROL, THE FLAMES, "JEE HAW!" SAID THE
HOLES, IGNITING THE T.N.T. THE EXPLOSION ROCKETED THE CYLINDERS
THROUGH THE AIR, LIKE FANTASTIC MORTAR BOMBS...



THE 5 FT. CYLINDERS WEIGHED 200 LBS. AND WERE FILLED WITH GAS
AT 1,960 LBS. PER SQUARE INCH. THEY WERE DYNAMITE! THEY SMASHED
OUT OF THE SKY DOWN ON TO THE GUN BATTERY...





THEIR FINAL ACT WAS TO RAM GAS CYLINDERS INTO THE BREECHES OF THE GUNS.

THAT PUTS PAID TO THEM!
NOW WE'LL SET FIRE TO THE TRUCK IN THE MAGAZINE AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS.



DO WE HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE, SIR?
MAYBE WE COULD FIND A BOAT...

WHILE THE GUNS SET ALIGHT, THEY SOUGHT OUT A NEARBY VILLAGE.

WHEN THE GUNS SET UP, THEY SHOT THEM OFF A CHAIN IN THE AMONG ALL THE AMMO IN HERE.



I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT, SIR... BUT IT OUGHT TO MAKE A BLOOMING BIG BANG.

COOKY, TONY GIBBS AND THE MOBILE INDUSTRIAL GAS COMPANY WERE MOVING ACROSS THE BAY TO THE PORT OF VOLGS WHEN THE WHOLE HILLSIDE ERUPTED IN A DEVASTATING EXPLOSION.



MAGNIFICENT!
THAT'S PUT PAID TO KAZONE FOR A LONG TIME!


AND WITH RESPECT, SIR, I THINK IT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE GAS COMPANY'S HONOURS!

SOMETHING LIKE THE 'CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE', EH, CHARLIE?

THE MAIN EVACUATION WAS WELL UNDER WAY BY THE TIME THEY REACHED THE HARBOUR. BOTH TONY'S AND COOKY'S THOUGHTS WERE ALREADY WITH THE FUTURE ...

TONY, FOR A NON-COMBATANT, THAT LITTLE ACTION WASN'T BAD. YOU GOING BACK TO THE ORDNANCE ?

NO, COOKY. I'VE A GREAT RESPECT FOR THAT CORPS -- BUT IT'S BACK TO THE ARTILLERY FOR ME -- AND A BASH AT THE JERRIES WITH REAL GUNS !



FOR CAPTAIN TONY GIBBS HAD FINALLY REALISED THAT A TIME OF WAR WAS NO TIME FOR THE LUXURY OF A TOUCHY CONSCIENCE. A SOLDIER HAD TO FIGHT — OR DIE !

THE CATCH

IT WAS A WEEK
AFTER 'D' DAY IN
JUNE 1944. MORE
TROOPS WERE BEING
POURED ASHORE
AS THE FOLLOW-UP
FORCE TO EXPAND
THE BRIDGE-HEAD...



THE BEACHES HAD BEEN TAKEN AND AS THE
NEWCOMERS MOVED INLAND THEY FOUND NO
OPPOSITION...

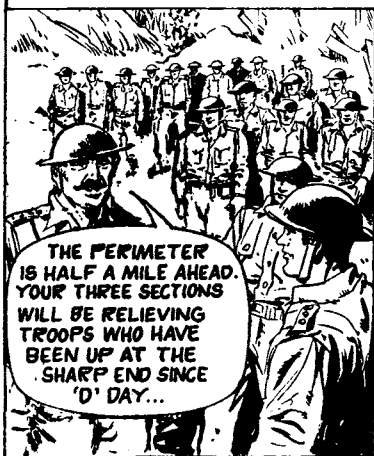


WE'VE GOT
IT, MADE, KEN. THE
JOKERS AHEAD HAVE
DONE ALL THE DIRTY
WORK...

THE WORDS HAD HARDLY BEEN SPOKEN
WHEN SHELLFIRE ROARED OVER...



THEY STAYED UNDER COVER UNTIL
THE SHELLING CEASED THEN WENT
ON TO THEIR RENDEZVOUS POINT...



I'VE GOT A GUIDE FOR EACH
OF YOUR SECTIONS, TO LEAD
THEM UP TO THE AREAS
THEY'RE TAKING OVER.
YOU'LL BE MORE THAN
WELCOME, LIEUTENANT!



IN ONE OF THE SECTIONS, ERIC PASCOE TURNED TO HIS PAL, KEN PERRY...

NOW WE'RE UP FRONT,
HOW DO YOU FEEL,
KEN?

TWICE AS
SCARED AS I WAS
BEFORE...

IT WAS DUSK
WHEN THEY
TOOK OVER...

YOU'VE GOT TWO
PROBLEMS HERE.
RATIONS ARE ROUGH...
HARDLY ENOUGH TO
KEEP BODY AND
SOUL TOGETHER...

AND YOU'VE GOT A JERRY
OUT THERE WHO'S RED-
HOT.' MAKE ONE BAD
MOVE AND IT'S
CURTAINS!

THE MEN THEY WERE RELIEVING
PULLED BACK FOR A WELL-EARNED
REST...

WE'LL TAKE
OUR CHANCES WITH
THE SNIPER, KEN, BUT I
DON'T FANCY ROUGH GRUB.
CAN'T YOU CATCH US
SOMETHING?

THERE
SHOULD BE SOME
GAME DOWN IN THOSE
WOODS...

KEN PERRY WAS A LINCOLNSHIRE LAD AND
CAME FROM A LONG LINE OF POACHERS...

I'VE
GOT MY SNARES
HERE...

SNARES,
PERRY? IF I CATCH
YOU WANDERING INTO THOSE
WOODS YOU'LL WISH
YOU'D JOINED THE
NAVY!

DON'T TAKE
ANY NOTICE OF HIM, KEN.
ALL THE LADS WILL KEEP
IT QUIET...

WHEN NIGHT FELL, KEN CREPT OUT
INTO THE WOOD...

I'LL SET THE SNARES AND
COME BACK AT FIRST LIGHT...

BUT WHEN HE WENT BACK IN THE
FIRST COLD LIGHT OF DAY...



HE WAS ON HIS WAY BACK WHEN HE
SPOTTED THE MARK IN THE HILL SIDE!!!



HE BENT DOWN — AND
SAVED HIS LIFE...



THERE WERE NO MORE SHOTS AND KEN HURRIED BACK AS FAST AS HE COULD...

ANY LUCK?

ONLY THAT I'M STILL ALIVE, BUT I DID SEE SOME DEER TRACKS OUT THERE. I'LL TRY AGAIN TONIGHT.

NICE VENISON STEAK'D GO DOWN WELL, WOULDN'T IT?

WELL, IF I'M GOING TO GET A DEER I'LL NEED SOMETHING STRONGER THAN SNARES. I'LL COLLECT SOME TOGGLE ROPES FROM THE LADS...

THAT NIGHT HE LAID HIS TRAP...

THAT SHOULD DO THE TRICK.



WHEN HE RETURNED, THE TRAP HAD BEEN SPRUNG - BUT NOT BY A DEER...



HE WAITED FOR THE GERMAN TO RECOVER CONSCIOUSNESS...



THE LIEUTENANT HAD DISCOVERED KEN'S ABSENCE. HE WAS LAYING THE LAW DOWN WHEN THE POACHER RE-APPEARED...



IT TOOK TEN MINUTES TO EXPLAIN TO THE IRATE OFFICER. BUT THEN...

WELL, PERRY, IF THAT'S
THE SORT OF POACHING
YOU DO, YOU CAN
GO ANY TIME YOU
LIKE.

I WAS
THINKING OF GIVING IT
UP, SIR. AFTER CATCHING
THAT BLOKE ANYTHING
ELSE WOULD BE
SMALL GAME!




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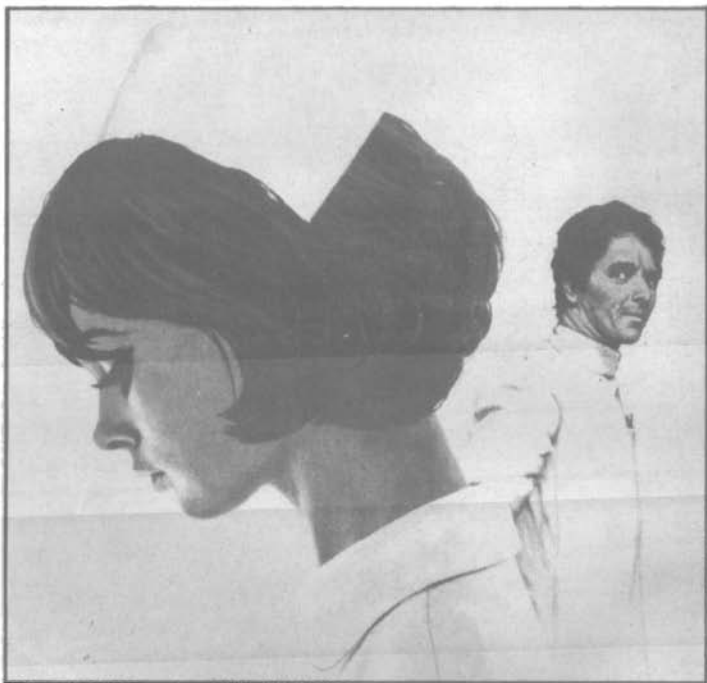


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